(b) if so, the number of WLL stations sanctioned;

(c) whether it is a fact that the WLL BTS equipment is yet to be sent to site; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) WLL BTSs have been sanctioned with a view to clear the waiting list.

(b) to (c) A total of 4 (four) WLL base stations have already been commissioned so far in rural area and 1 (one) in urban area in Kamrup Telecom District of Assam. Another 6 (six) WLL BTSs are planned to be installed in rural area and 13 (thirteen) in urban area of Kamrup Telecom District. The planned BTSs are to be provided from 10.5 lakh WLL procurement tender. The tender is under Technical evaluation and after finalization of the tender, the Purchase Orders are to the placed and equipment is to be sent to the site subsequently.

Opening of additional passport office in Mumbai

†*497. SHRI DATTAMEGHE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether many applications for issuance of passport are pending in the country, particularly in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, whether it is proposed to open one more passport office in Mumbai for quick disposal of the pending applications in view of heavy work load in the existing Mumbai office;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes Sir, as on 15.4.2005, approximately 1,57,527 passport applications are pending in 30 Passport Offices. However, in Maharashtra state, the pendency is only 1245 in Mumbai, 1406 in Nagpur, 307 in Pune and Nil in Thane.

(b) No, Sir.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) With a view to decentralise the submission of passport applications, this Ministry has set up District Passport Cells (DPCs) in several districts in almost all the states. These DPCs function from the office of the District Magistrate or Superintendent of Police as per discretion/ decision of the State Government. The DPCs receive the passport applications and after scrutinising them *and having the police verification in respect of the applicant carried out* forward the applications to the concerned Passport Office for further processing and issuance of passports. The opening of DPCs has not only taken the passport services closer to the public but also resulted in reducing the time taken for issuance of the Police Verification Reports. Six DPCs are already functional in the state of Maharashtra viz Dadar, Daman, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Aurangabad and Beed. Recently, to ease congestion in RPO Mumbai, four DPCs have been opened in Mumbai city at Bandra, Chembur, Crawford Market and Kandivili w.e.f. 04.04.2005.

Promotion of SSIs by KVIC

*498. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Khadi and Village Industries Commission has chalked out any scheme for promotion and development of small scale industries in rural areas of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) if not, the reasons therefore; and

(d) the necessary steps being taken by Government in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a), (b) and (d) Under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Act, 1956, the KVIC is responsible for promoting and developing village industries in rural areas, including small towns with population up to 20,000.

The Government through the KVIC, has been implementing the Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) since 1 April 1995, for the promotion and development of village industries along with generation of employment opportunities in the rural areas. The REGP is a credit-linked-